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AUTHOR Berlin, Antje
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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on media politics, guidance and control mechanisms, journalism education, various modes of media in use, and coverage of important news in East Germany. The paper gives special consideration to the influence of West German broadcasting in East Germany. The need for such information is that it will give insight into Eastern bloc mass media systems, knowledge of which has been very limited because of very strict regulations by the governing party. It will also help to find out to what extent the mass media is an instrument of the powerful party apparatus and whether indoctrination of the people by mass media really works. The paper concludes that (1) lack of any data on media research in East Germany makes it difficult to define how the East German public perceives its mass media; (2) it is clear that East Germans who tune in to West German news programs are among the best informed people in any Communist country, something that must subtly influence government policy; and (3) many West Germans see the cultural penetration of East Germany as the single greatest contribution to the prospect of German reunification. (Twenty-nine notes are included, and 20 references are appended.) (MS)

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MASS MEDIA IN EAST GERMANY

By

Antje Berlin

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
Chapel Hill, NC

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MASS MEDIA IN EAST GERMANY

Introduction

The role of the mass media in the East Bloc has always been of special interest to Western analysts. To what extent are the mass media an instrument of the powerful party apparatus, and does indoctrination of the people by mass media really work? Since the insight of Western researchers into Eastern mass media systems is very limited due to very strict regulations by the governing party, studies and figures are based on estimates. The only exception to this pattern is East Germany, whose media fight for recognition in a desperate struggle with competing broadcasting from West Germany. Letters from East Germans to the West and reports of refugees and emigrants tell about the unique importance of Western media to the people of the strongest Soviet ally. No where else there is such a strong direct influence of Western information systems on Communist ideology.

This paper focuses on a presentation of media politics, guidance and control mechanisms, journalism education, the various modes of media in use, and coverage of important news in the GDR. Special consideration is given to the influence of West German broadcasting on East Germany.

Since Germany's division in 1945, this highly industrialized nation has developed into two states. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) characterized by its constitution as a "democratic and social federal state" with "all power emanating from the people" through

universal, equal, direct and secret elections and the separation of powers, is bound to the constitutional order and the law.(1)

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the constitution serves as an aid to the development of a socialist society as defined in the program of the ruling Marxist-Leninist Socialist Unity Party (SED). This party enjoys monopolistic "leadership" in political, social and economic life. Claiming to be able to perceive the "objective laws of the social development", the SED uses the constitution as an instrument to carry out the party's decisions and programs.(2)

These basic differences are also demonstrated in the two countries' different media systems. In the FRG, press and film are private institutions, whereas radio and television are public institutions, run and controlled by autonomous boards of societal representatives. Freedom of opinion and of the media is constitutionally guaranteed.

In the GDR the mass media are viewed as important instruments for directing and controlling the process of opinion-making within the framework of the political program formulated by the SED. The Communist Party's media policy is based on Lenin's famous theses that the press is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organizer. The media's propaganda orders are to disseminate Marxism-Leninism to the population. As agitators they are obliged to support the policy of the leaders of the SED and of the state.(3) The newest figures (BBC, London, 1985) reveal that the GDR with a population of 16.7 million has 12 million radio sets and 7.2 million TV sets. There are 72 radio sets and

43 TV sets per hundred of population. These figures on media equipment are the highest in Eastern Europe.

While communication between neighboring countries which are political adversaries is often limited by mail restriction, restraint on travel and a ban on the distribution of printed material, broadcasting almost always succeeds in reaching curious listeners and viewers. Radio and television can not be stopped at the borders. The two Germanys speak the same language, which makes it possible for the broadcasting media to maintain communication between the increasingly divided cultures. (4)

Media politics

When Erich Honecker became General Secretary of the SED Party at the VIII Party Assembly in 1971, East German politics faced a new beginning. Under his leadership everything is said to have improved, including media politics. Honecker criticized his predecessor, Walter Ulbricht, for not having realized the goals set in Lenin's theses for utilization of the media. In contrast to the mass media of the capitalist countries, the GDR mass media were "a stage of the people." The job of the journalist is to answer the questions of the people in a simple, convincing language. He criticized the television, for being boring and not entertaining enough.

In 1976 at the IX Party Assembly, Honecker expressed more precisely why television should become more attractive: The fight against the bourgeoisie ideology was going on 24 hours a day in full power. Honecker was referring to the increasing competition with West German broadcasting.

In 1981 Honecker stated his satisfaction with the mass media as hard hitting instruments in the fight against imperialism. He announced that in 1981 1770 different newspapers and magazines had been published with a total circulation of about 40 million. 90 percent of all households had a TV set, of which 17 percent were color TVs. Practically every family had one or more radios.

At a meeting with the GDR district leaders in February, 1982, Honecker criticized the information politics for being ineffective, while simultaneously insisting that it was essential to determine beforehand in what way information should be given to the public. His audience realized at this point that no reform could be expected, since journalists were still forbidden to do their own research; editorials were still written by the Central Party Committee or by the Party District Officials. Personal opinion was not asked for. Honecker used the sometimes confusing Western mass media as a warning example, stressing that the haphazard implementation of mixed media results in disinformation and prevents the population from realizing its own interests. Honecker said the East German citizen was "informed," because he or she extensively studied the SED newspaper "Neues Deutschland." All journalists were obligated to follow the format and content, which the party dictated for "Neues Deutschland." (5)

The actual dilemma of the SED media politics is that news releases submitted by the "Politbuero" and Party Assembly, which are repeated without any changes at least in the print media, are rejected even by strong party supporters as being non-informative propaganda. The solution, how to combine mass effectiveness and mass support for party politics, without giving too much room for a

variety of opinions, is still looked for. The editor of the SED newspaper "New Germany" recommended to his colleagues to offer more diverse, but shorter stories. The informational content has not improved by this new technique. Shortness is used as a means of manipulation and disinformation. False reporting usually results from break downs in the guidance mechanisms of the opinion makers in the "Politbuero".(6)

Guidance mechanisms

The Secretary for Agitation and Propaganda of the SED's Central Committee guides and steers the GDR's Press Council, and the State Committee for radio and television. It is the Committees' duty to control the media in various ways: they grant licenses, they do long-term planning and they issue press instructions. Although "freedom of the press" is proclaimed in Article 27 (2) of the Constitution of the GDR, it is limited considerably by special laws and regulations, requiring its interpretation in accordance with Lenin's understanding of freedom of the press as "everything serving and advancing class-struggle". Whatever furthers the class-struggle is defined by decisions of the SED.(7)

An official censorship existed only for a short time after the Second World War under the occupation of the Soviet Forces. Today the opinion makers seem to have learned how to censor without having any official censorship by applying a perfect system of guidance mechanisms. Self-censorship is hereby taken for granted. Those who do not apply any self-censorship have to carry the consequences themselves, as today's president of the people's chamber, Helmut

Sindermann, admitted in January 1957. There is no official censorship because the journalists only have to pass on pre-written articles. This is also true for foreign journalist, who work for the GDR foreign station Radio Berlin International (RBI). They are only responsible for translating manuscripts, which they receive from the Central Editing Desk.

A mandatory condition for socialist freedom of the press is that all publishing companies belong to the party or the state. Since the freedom of information is not mentioned in the GDR constitution, officials can easily forbid the import and distribution of western newspapers and magazines. The criminal law of the GDR also limits the freedom of the press and opinion. Paragraph 106, with the vague headline "state adversary activities" is the basis for prosecuting any opposing expression of opinion in spoken word and print. It gives precise information on the limits which publications distributed outside the GDR are subjected to as well as the limits for seeking contact with western journalists. Protection of the freedom of the press means "not to tolerate any abuse of the mass media by bourgeoisie ideology". (8)

News is considered a very effective weapon in the ideological class-struggle. Not information, but manipulation by party politics is the highest goal of news coverage in the GDR. The state news agency ADN (General German News Service), supervised by the State Press Council, is responsible for this news coverage. ADN was founded October 10, 1946 in East Berlin as a private company. In April 1953 the GDR government decided to change ADN into a state institution. ADN is supposed to participate in the developing and structuring of

the socialist consciousness of all classes in the the GDR population. ADN must give up to date and party conforming information. ADN is headed by a General Director, who is directly appointed by the GDR Council of Ministers. A total of about 1,200 employees with about 300 reporters and editors work for the ADN in news rooms all over the GDR. The Central Editing Desk is located in East Berlin.

ADN uses news from important news services all over the world. ADN decides what information may be given to the rest of the East German mass media. Except for the newspaper "New Germany", no other East German newspaper may employ foreign correspondents. For this reason GDR newspapers depend on the large ADN network of foreign correspondents, which spreads over all important capitals of the world. In 1982 ADN had 41 foreign news offices. ADN correspondents were accredited in 62 countries. ADN doesn't only possess the monopoly on news but also on photographs. The Picture Service "Central Picture," which is part of ADN, provides all newspapers with photographs. Only the "New Germany" may employ its own staff of photographers. Local newsrooms may use pictures about local communities.(9)

Journalism education

There is only one center for the education in socialist journalism in East Germany - Leipzig. After World War II the Institute of Journalism at the University of Leipzig was re-established. Soon it was denounced for teaching "bourgeois journalism." Some temporary organizational arrangements followed, but in 1954 a school for socialist journalism science (Fakultaet fuer

Journalistik), closely resembling the schools in Kiev and Moscow, was put in the place of the traditional institute. In 1969 the "third University Reform" was carried out, resulting in a reorganization of Journalistik at the University of Leipzig. The Sektion Journalistik was established as one of nine sections within the Faculty of Social Sciences.

From its beginning, it was the intention of Journalistik as "the socialist journalism science" to be distinguishable by its terminology from "bourgeois journalism and communications". Based on Marxist theory, socialist journalism does not have "to see everything from all sides, but everything in a certain perspective". Journalistik's main task is "to contribute decisively in accomplishing the socialist man", and "helping to explain and to realize the policy and decisions of the party and the government". Information and entertainment are subordinated to education.

The 3 1/2 year program is split up into three sequences: a basic, a special and a media course. A state examination ends the program with the degree Diplom-Journalist being awarded. A career in journalism requires the completion of a one-year apprenticeship in the media. The editor-in-chief or the cadre-group of the SED may request the candidate's admission to the Sektion Journalistik at Leipzig. Further qualification tests have to be passed at the university itself.

In 1965 journalism training was started at the Fachschule fuer Journalistik, also in Leipzig. The major part of this three-year-program is taught in correspondence courses. The main differences between the University program and the one of the

Fachschule is said to lie "primarily in the amount of knowledge and, to some degree, in the depth of knowledge offered." In 1973 about 38 percent of East Germany's 6,500 journalists were Leipzig graduates of one kind or the other. (10)

GDR journalists are obliged to be members of the Association of Journalists of the GDR (VDJ). In June 1982 the association was said to have 8,400 members. The goal of the association is to promote the political-ideological and journalistic education and the GDR journalists. The VDJ is partly responsible for the education of volunteers in the newsrooms, publishing houses and other journalistic institutions. The Leipzig Fachschule for Journalism is directly supervised by the VDJ. A main concern of the VDJ is to educate journalists from the third world in the "School of Solidarity" at the International Institute for Journalism in East Berlin. (11)

Various media offered in the GDR

Newspapers

Thirty-nine daily newspapers are published in the GDR with a total circulation of about 8.9 million. Seventeen of those 39 newspapers are published by the SED, including the most important newspaper "New Germany". The SED papers have a circulation of about six million and consume the main part of the scarce paper supply. The "New Germany" is the biggest daily newspaper with a circulation of about 1.1 million.

There are 15 district newspapers with a circulation of about five million. The district papers represent the SED district offices

and are published independently in each of the 218 districts. According to the "Dictionary of Socialist Journalism" SED papers enjoy a monopoly, because they supposedly satisfy mass appeal. The content of the papers ideally should match the interest of SED members and other advanced workers. It must show the right direction and must challenge their knowledge and consciousness. The SED papers were the only journalistic means that satisfy these demands in the local, regional, national and international area.

Thus, only the SED papers may administer the informational need of the GDR citizens. The 17 newspapers of the "bloc parties" (other than the SED) only exist on the periphery. They have a total circulation of about one million. The control of the periodicals is made easy, since they are also published mainly by the parties and mass organizations. The "Central Print Company" (ZENTRAG), which is directly supervised by the SED Central Committee, consists of more than 90 printeries, publishing houses and distribution companies. Ninety percent of the GDR printing capacity is monopolized by ZENTRAG.

Thirty-one weekly newspapers and magazines are published with a total circulation of about 9.3 million. Variety doesn't mean plurality in this case, because most of the magazines have a specific target group. They are exclusively directed at either the military, farmers, families, teachers, etc. (12)

After Honecker became the leading figure in the GDR, local news gained a lot of importance. Local news coverage is supposed to intensify the contact between party officials and communities. Much column space in the local pages is given to discussions between the

ordinary citizen and the party representative. Since there is no legal opposition, the SED has increased interest in soliciting criticism from the public. Eventually this criticism is taken into consideration in the party decisions, but the final decisions can never be reviewed by the public. The party line also has the final word also in local news coverage. The local party offices supervise this practise. Local news also includes information about shortages in food supply and major accidents. The SED doesn't want this information to get outside of the local community, which is one reason why subscriptions to local newspapers aren't available outside the GDR (except the East Berlin papers). Another important feature of the local papers are letters to the editor. They provide important information for the internal party use. Spontaneous letters to the editor are a good measurement of the attitude of the people. Editors are instructed to pass on the letters to the State Council, which implies an evaluation of the letters by the State Security Service.

Due to the increasing crime rate in the GDR, even the "New Germany" reports more and more about crime, drunk driving, arrests and court actions. This is not done to satisfy people's wish for sensational news but to support law propaganda and education. Reading the ads and announcements in the local papers tells a lot about the concerns of the average citizen. Those who want to buy a car more quickly or try to get hold of rare goods put an ad in their local paper. (13)

The communist press usually plans particular news coverage in advance. The result from a Western point of view is a press

characterized by "selection and exclusion, overemphasis, underemphasis, repetition, campaigns, argumentation, emotionalism, diversion, indirection, satire, ridicule and mocking." A study, published in 1985, deals with how the Communist press handled an event, which by ordinary standards would be ignored, but which because of its magnitude had to be covered. The event looked at was the downing of Korean Airlines Flight 007 by a Soviet fighter on the morning of September 1, 1983, which caused the death of 269 people. The researchers looked at the 64 articles on the event, carried by the GDR newspaper "New Germany". They found that the "New Germany" followed the Soviet lead almost entirely. Even in an unexpected and difficult case, "New Germany" held to the traditional techniques of the Communist press. While Western actions condemned by the GDR remain fixtures in "New Germany" long after the event has passed (e.g. Grenada), Communist actions, such as the KAL 007 affair, are seldom mentioned after the initial report.(14)

Radio

In September 1968 the State Broadcasting Committee at the Minister Council was divided into the State Committee for Radio and the State Committee for Television. The State Committee for Radio permanently evaluates Soviet broadcasting and broadcasting from other socialist countries. It also puts together the programming and format for its radio organizations.

The Chairman of the State Committee for Radio is responsible to the Council of Ministers for four radio organizations, 12 regional programs and 11 programs for foreign information. From 62 to 65

percent of the national programs is music. The four radio organizations are:

Radio GDR. This is East Germany's domestic medium-wave service which consists of 14 regional stations and two national networks. GDR I operates 24 hours per day and features a mixture of music, news, commentary and drama. GDR II is a 7-hour per day FM service which caters to a more serious audience than GDR I. It is the country's main outlet for classical music as well as "education and quality" programs.

Berlin Radio (Berliner Rundfunk). This service is organized to serve and reflect the climate of the East German capital city and is broadcast throughout the country from various medium-wave transmitters.

Voice of the GDR (Stimme der DDR). This service is roughly comparable to West Germany's Deutschland Funk. Its main purpose is to reach German speakers in Central Europe and to explain "the attitude of the GDR towards important international events, trends and problems." The service's signal is distributed from powerful long, medium and short-wave transmitters.

Radio Berlin International (RBI). Established in 1955, two years after West Germany's Deutsche Welle, RBI is East Germany's international broadcasting service. In 1981 it transmitted internationally in German and eight other languages. Apart from the U.S.S.R., East Germany is the most active international broadcaster in Eastern Europe. (15)

Radio in the GDR is in line with SED policy, seen as a uniform state organization. That's why people speak of an organizational

unity of radio programming. The electronic media are also subjected to the control and guidance mechanisms, which limit the press. Radio in the GDR faces stiff competition from GDR TV and broadcasting from the West. The audience favors Western radio station, such as the West Berlin RIAS or the Cologne Deutschlandfunk. However, the West German stations can not replace the regional GDR programs with their local news coverage.

East Germans don't only listen to West German stations to get political information. Western rock music attracts many of the listeners, particularly the younger ones. The GDR follows the principle that socialist music and capitalist music must be played in a relationship of 60 to 40 percent. This is not only for ideological reasons, but also, because Western music costs hard currency, which is needed for other more important purposes. At night controversial issues are addressed in mainly satirical programs, but these have very low ratings.

Television

East German experimental television transmissions began in 1952; four years later, in January 1956, the full service was formalised. In 1969 a second television service was added. The television operation is headquartered in Berlin, but some regional stations operate in various sections of East Germany. The East German television system is unique among East European countries because the transmission standard is the same as West Germany's. (16)

East Germany, however, opted for a different color system than the West German one. A Japanese trading house received orders in 1981

from East Germany for equipment for making color-television picture tubes. It valued the order at the equivalent of about \$404 million. The plants were to be located in Berlin and were scheduled to go into operation in 1984.(17)

The East German news show "Aktuelle Kamera" first aired in December 1952 in honor of Stalin's 73rd birthday. After the establishment of the State Committee for Television in 1968 the stations in Berlin, Dresden, Dequede and Schwerin started transmitting the second television service. That's where the first color transmissions also started. The first television service has offered color TV since 1973. In 1976 school programming was introduced with periodical air time. There is no regional television programming in the GDR. The first TV service airs during the week from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m. with a two hour break. The second service is on the air from about 6 p.m. to about 11 p.m. throughout the week. Both services transmit the news show "Aktuelle Kamera". This news show has often a rating of only 7 percent. The East German sports shows have very high ratings, because East German athletes are very successful on the international level. Those, who are in charge of the media's entertainment sector, have the most difficult role in the apparatus of the GDR television. They invite Western artists and entertainers to raise their ratings; they also air Western movies and series. This often leads to harsh criticism from the guards of "socialist entertainment" in the SED Central Committee.

No East German television program is better known in West Berlin than Monday evening's "Der schwarze Kanal" ("The Black Channel"). The 20-minute program, started in 1960, features the commentaries of Karl

Eduard von Schnitzler, a controversial figure in both East and West Germany. The program shows video taped segments of West German television from the preceding week. These are arranged to show and to comment on the economic, social or political problems of West Germany. It is meant to correct any erroneous idea that East German citizens may have picked up from watching Western television. Schnitzler himself said in a youth magazine, aired by the second GDR service in October 1977, that East Germans had to learn how to live with their enemy, referring to the West German TV, and that he was giving some life aid in his television show. (18)

Broadcasting between the two Germanies

In 1978 the West German news magazine "Der Spiegel" published an anonymous letter to the editor from a group of East Germans on the impact of West German television for East German citizens. (19) They said the information given by the East German media was scarce, one sided and not suited to give the citizen a complete image of what was going on in- and outside the GDR. At that time every third GDR citizen had a TV set to switch on West German programming. Their data revealed that the GDR news cast "Aktuelle Kamera" seldom got ratings higher than 10 percent; West German news casts like the ARD-"Tagesschau" and the ZDF-"Heute" had GDR ratings between 22 and 40 percent. In times with a very high need of information (i.e. the Mogadischu kidnapping), up to 87 percent of the GDR people watched West German TV. The writers of the letter to the editor asked West German TV producers to schedule their programming according to the needs of the East German people. The average East German must get up very early in

the morning and thus must go to bed at night fairly early. Statistics show that at 10 p.m. only seven percent of the East German television audience is still watching. The writers complained about the late schedule of many popular West German TV shows and magazines. They said, they understand that West German TV does not primarily exist to supply East Germany with information and entertainment, but West German TV should realize that East Germany very much depends on Western media to keep up with what is going on in the world. They added that in their belief the separation process of the two German countries could only be prevented by a higher level of information in the GDR. We don't want to be second class people, they said.

During the 1960s, the East German government officially discouraged the viewing of West German television. Jamming of television signals was tried and gangs of youthful police and soldiers destroyed rooftop antennae which were turned toward the West. In May 1973, Honecker referred to West German broadcasting in a now famous remark: "Everybody can turn these stations on or off whenever they want," a statement taken by East Germans as official approval to tune in West German stations. (20) Honecker has not quite reversed Lenin's cynical maxim that "trust is good; control is better." But he clearly prefers to govern by consent rather than coercion.

West Berlin based television transmitters ensure that ARD and ZDF broadcasts are available to between 85 and 90 percent of East German viewers. Of those who can receive a West German television signal, about 40 percent watch every day. (21) Some transmitters of the ARD and ZDF are purposefully located along the border between the

two countries with the intention of reaching listeners and viewers in the other Germany.

Approximately 100 miles inside East Germany is West Berlin, from which many broadcasting stations air local and national programs to West Berlin and East Berlin citizens. From a broadcasting perspective, this is an important advantage over the East Germans with additional impact because East Berlin is the East German capital. Thus the West German broadcasts are available on a local basis to an important and influential target audience.

Sender Freies Berlin (SFB) is the main broadcasting corporation which broadcasts to East Germany. No programs are designed specifically for reception in East Germany, but an effort is made to provide radio and television broadcasts about Berlin and West Germany of interest to East German viewers. The West Berlin radio station RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) is primarily intended to reach East German. U.S. officials described RIAS during the Cold War Era as playing "probably the greatest strategic role in our fight against the Soviet dictatorship in East Germany." Despite the potential personal danger of sending fan mail to RIAS, the station receives letters from East German listeners which encourage it to continue broadcasting. RIAS also broadcasts, like other West German radio services, West German television schedules.(22) Because West German newspapers and magazines are not available in East Germany, broadcasting is the only means of knowing the ARD and ZDF schedule.

Agreements between both countries for certain cultural exchanges have permitted West German media representatives access to East Germany. The ZDF service transmits a program, called "Kennzeichen D",

which deals with detailed coverage and analysis of events in both Germanies. In January 1981 ARD and ZDF cooperated on the transmission of morning television, because they believed that this was an important aspect of their outreach to East Germans who are not able to watch during evening hours. A large portion of the East German work force participates in shift work, which makes people return home early in the morning and often watch West German morning TV before they sleep. General quality of life is much different in East Germany than in West Germany. For East Germans the television commercials must paint an attractive picture of West Germany in spite of occasional attempts by East Germany to suggest they are examples of capitalistic decadence. In East Germany only a limited amount of advertising is permitted on television. (23)

In 1979 Richard von Weizaecker, today's Federal President, said in an interview for the Christian Science Monitor that it was too risky for Honecker to permit Western TV, beyond giving its own comments, to go on to reflect the views of East Berliners and East Germans themselves and to offer, unofficial opposition TV, consisting of voices of ordinary citizens of East Germany. It was West German television's interviews of disgruntled East Berlin shoppers that triggered East Germany's severe restrictions on foreign reporters' movement and access to East German citizens in April 1979. (24)

In January 1984 the New York Times reported that an odd thing had happened in the southeastern corner of East Germany. Around Dresden, reception of West German television was bad or nonexistent. This made bureaucrats and even Communist Party functionaries reluctant to move to the area. So, quietly the authorities had

started laying cables to bring capitalist programs into socialist homes. (25) An article in Variety in November 1985 said there were several reasons for the government's approval of bringing in the West German programs. West German nets were turning to more realistic topics for their documentaries, showing the country's unemployment and the demonstrations of radical youth groups. East German authorities could capitalize on these programs by pointing out to their own young people that life in the West is filled with discontent. Also, residents of the Dresden area had filled the highest quotas of requests for visas to West Germany. The Socialists pointed out that their people would be more happy to stay home if they see the problems in West Germany. (26)

Variety reports in November 1986 that a pirate radio show gave East Berliners details of the Chernobyl disaster earlier that year. The half-hour broadcast warned the Socialists of nuclear energy and urged East Germans and Russians to cease their atomic reactor operations. East German authorities claimed that the underground radio operation was an illegal use of international air waves. Several East German students taped the show and it was expected that the tapes were circulated in the East Berlin underground and sold at flea markets. (27)

East Germans were treated to the most extensive coverage of Honecker's trip to West Germany by their newspapers, radio and television, according to a New York Times article of September 1987. From the moment Honecker arrived in Bonn to his departure from Munich five days later, East Germany's television offered hours of coverage, often live, while the press carried the full texts of speeches and

toasts. The East Germans could have followed it through West German TV. But their own television not only covered more of the junkett, but also gave an unusual amount of airtime to a few normally forbidden thoughts. Although Honecker's visit to his sister in West Germany was reported in the East German media, "Neues Deutschland" drew the line by deciding against introducing Honecker's sister to the East German population. (28) It avoided addressing the sensitive issue that East Germans, who have relatives in the West, are barred from sensitive jobs, such as traveling in the West.

Conclusion

Since there are hardly any data on media research in the GDR, it is somewhat difficult to define how the East German public perceives its mass media. Letters to the editor reveal criticism among the population and are indicators for the existence of a public opinion, which does not follow the SED dogma. Because evaluating the East German mass media requires a tremendous knowledge of Socialist ideology, most studies done by Western researchers are led by political scientists. These mostly do not answer the questions which are put forth by scholars of communication science. The main reason for the disinterest of Western communication specialists in evaluating East German mass media lies in the scarcity of relevant accessible sources. Information about polls and ratings of the East German mass media is not made available. One of the most important sources is the "Dictionary of Socialist Journalism", which was published in 1973 for internal use at the Sektion Journalistik in Leipzig. (29)

West German correspondents in the GDR have to overcome the information gaps, left open by the East German mass media. They feel confronted with the unique task of informing the people of their host country about the politics of their own government.

However, it is clear that East Germans who tune into West German news programs are among the best informed people in any Communist country, something that must subtly influence Government policy. East Germans get a clear view of the richer standard of living in the West, which puts pressure on the regime to provide better living conditions in the East. Many West Germans see the cultural penetration of East Germany as the single greatest contribution to the prospect of German reunification.

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